Nourishing Controlled Environments: Bonsai Philosophy in Teacher Training

Oleksandra Halchenko

Istanbul University

Abstract

It has been well-known that we can’t teach what we do not know. In depth knowledge of the teacher students’ environments is a prerequisite for successful teacher training experiences. Similar to Bonsai Trees, teacher trainees are planted within a confined space. The word “Bonsai” is a Japanese word meaning “planted in a container. Bonsai philosophy sheds light on nourishing and observation of the controlled environments, when a harmonious attitude is inculcated. Hence, the traditional teacher training programs focus primarily on developing prospective teachers’ pedagogical knowledge in ideal environments. The study attempts to answer the question how classroom management can be improved by observations of teacher trainees’ environments. The results suggest that the observations of controlled environments are complimentary processes that can enhance teacher education programs and enable us to better prepare inexperienced teachers for the challenges related to classroom management. The main purpose of the research was to obtain a coherent representation of the characteristics of the workplace learning environments for CELT-P and CELT-S course takers in public schools of Turkey, Istanbul. The second purpose was to gain insight as to the effective feedback providing, which brings improvement and balance to teaching put into context. The literature study was conducted to determine a current knowledge concerning Bonsai philosophy and how it correlates with teacher training. Additionally, through empirical exploration, an outline of characteristics of successful feedback providing and classroom management training was obtained. With the aid of concept mapping, the query was conducted. CELT-P and CELT-S course trainees answered open-ended questions pertaining to feedback provided after three consequential lesson observations, and classroom management skills gained. The results obtained by literature study and empirical research were combined.

Keywords: bonsai philosophy; teacher training; providing feedback; classroom management; observations